



**Washington State Supreme Court
Commission on Children in Foster Care
December 7th, 2015
Meeting Minutes**

Justice Bobbe Bridge (ret.), Washington State Supreme Court, Commission Co-Chair
Jennifer Strus, Assistant Secretary, Children's Administration, Commission Co-Chair
Judge Kitty-Ann van Doorninck, Superior Court Judges' Association
Mr. Mike Canfield, Co-Chair of Foster Parents Association of Washington
Mr. Ryan Murrey, Executive Director, Washington State CASA
Dr. Dan Newell, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ms. Joanne Moore, Director, Office of Public Defense
Ms. Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office
Ms. Kristy Healing, NW Intertribal Council
Ms. Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative

Members Not Present

Mr. Jim Bamberger, Office of Civil Legal Aid; Ms. Beth Canfield, Co-Chair of Foster Parents Association of Washington; Rep. Ruth Kagi, Washington State House of Representatives; Ms. Tonia Morrison, Parent Advocate Representative; Mr. Bob Ferguson, Attorney General of the State of Washington; Senator Steve O'Ban, Washington State Senate; Judge Harold D. Clarke III, Superior Court Judges' Association; Mr. Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Ms. Jill Malat, Office of Civil Legal Aid; Ms. Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children

Guests

Ms. Cindy Bricker, Sr. Court Program Analyst, AOC; Ms. Megan Walton, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Amara; Ms. Erin Shea McCann, Mockingbird Society; Mr. Sabian Hart, Youth in Care; Ms. Gina Cumbo, Center for Children and Youth Justice, Ms. Karen Dinan, Office of the Attorney General; Ms. Lisa Kelly, University of Washington School of Law; Ms. Lorrie Thompson

Staff Present

Ms. Kimberly Ong, CCFC Staff Intern, Center for Children & Youth Justice
Ms. Nichole Kloepfer, AOC

Call to Order

Asst. Secretary Jennifer Strus called the meeting to order at 1:10pm. She welcomed all Commission members and guests and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

DSHS/Children's Administration Updates

Ass't Secretary Strus provided an update on Family Assessment Response (FAR) implementation. FAR is anticipating its first evaluation and, pending the results of the

evaluation, DSHS is considering pausing the FAR implementation plan. DSHS needs to determine whether FAR is meeting its objectives. If the evaluation results are positive, additional funding will be sought for implementation.

Ass't Secretary Strus next explained DSHS's Performance Based Contracting (PBC) plan in Eastern Washington with the Empire Health Foundation (EHF). EHF was to contract with providers to provide services to families in the region. Due to issues regarding clarity of relationships between DSHS, the contractors, and the providers, DSHS has paused PBC and will restart it this December after amending the EHF contract. DSHS also plans to enact a different PBC plan in Western Washington that will consist of regional contracts with many providers to serve specialized needs. A different PBC plan will allow DSHS to compare the experience to the procedures in Eastern Washington. They will have more updates in early January.

Ass't Secretary Strus stated that one of DSHS's current concerns is their capacity to respond to the foster care crisis given retention and recruitment issues. The Department is currently experiencing a 20% turnover rate and a workforce that is 70% comprised of individuals with less than one year of experience.

Judge van Doorninck asked if there's been an effort to secure funds for an increase in pay for CA social workers. Ass't Secretary Strus responded that CA has made efforts, but there are four other administrations within DSHS that share the same classification, so CA loses their social workers to other administrations who pay the same but feature less emotionally draining work. She is attempting to secure an additional 10% for CA social workers on top of the pay increase that this classification is anticipating. Justice Bridge suggested a new classification for CA social workers, but Ass't Secretary Strus advised that reclassification is a lengthy and difficult process. Ms. Moore asked if CA could better train and prepare their social workers. Ass't Secretary Strus maintained that CA social workers are well-trained and are not allowed to take on a caseload until they have gone through Academy training. Mr. Hart asked what the requirements are to becoming a CA social worker. Ass't Secretary Strus informed that it requires a Bachelor's degree at the minimum and that she could email him additional information. She has plans to speak to the union to get their suggestions on the matter of retention and recruitment.

Justice Bridge posed the question of how to improve retention rates of foster families. Ass't Secretary Strus reminded the Commission of the fact that some foster youth are getting more difficult to place. Justice Bridge asked if there was a plan to better train foster families. Ass't Secretary Strus informed that she has spoken to CA's IT department and they are in the process of buying a smart phone application that would provide foster parents information about the foster child in their home. Mr. Hart suggested a network of foster parent mentors, which Mr. Canfield informed him already exists in FPAWS, which is currently focusing on ways to support the education of foster parents. The Academy has a caregiver training program that he finds ineffective, but FPAWS is utilizing their mini-conferences and social media to help recruit and educate more families.

Quality Improvement Center (QIC) Update

Ms. Gina Cumbo reported on the QIC project – a research and demonstration project courttraining model for representatives of children in dependency proceedings. A QIC

celebration was held on November 6th to recognize the hard work and cooperation of the WA attorneys who participated in the study. At the celebration, the preliminary results were unveiled and potential next steps and how to utilize the resulting analyses were discussed.

Washington's participation in the study was exceptional. Washington implemented the study protocol with greater fidelity than Georgia, the second research and demonstration site. Participation rates for all WA study attorneys were very high – close to 90% each quarter. Preliminary study results indicate that the treatment group attorneys had increased contact with caregivers, spent more time thinking about theory of case and assessing the safety of the child, and tended to advocate non-adversarial methods of case resolutions when compared to the control group of attorneys. The treatment group attorneys were also more likely to report that their advocacy did not agree with the child's wishes. Ass't Secretary Strus asked clarifying questions about the scope of the study and the implication of its findings and Ms. Cumbo informed the Commission that they could refer to the Chapin Hall evaluation summary document (pages 19-26 of the meeting packet) if they wanted more detailed information about the research.

Ms. Cumbo relayed that King County has discussed bringing on the training as a part of their procedures for attorneys and that further discussion will happen around the infrastructure of follow up training.

Youth Summit Recommendations & Updates

Ms. Erin Shea McCann reviewed August 2016's Youth Summit recommendations from each of the six chapters of the Mockingbird Society. She explained that the Summit report is almost complete and that they anticipate distribution before Christmas.

One Family, One Team (OFOT) Report

Ms. Megan Walton briefed the Commission on the One Family, One Team (OFOT) publicprivate partnership to improve the dependency court process through team decision making and early resolution of cases. The draft report will be shared with the Commission and include planning and design elements. She reported that the partnership plans to pursue funding in the 2016 legislative session. Justice Bridge noted that the model components and the evaluation are key. There currently is no evaluation on unified family courts in the U.S. and evaluation data is essential to improving the process.

Needs of Foster Youth in Indian Country

Ms. Healing introduced herself to the Commission as a parent advocate attorney and a representative for youth in tribal communities. She plans to speak to tribal groups to determine their issues and to share their perspective with the Commission. She hopes that being a part of this Commission will help her understand how the state and tribes can work together in the context of foster care. Ass't Secretary Strus suggested that she contact with the Indian Policy Advisory Committee, which is a Children's Administration committee that meets monthly through video conferences across the state.

November Adoption Celebrations & Updates

Ms. Lorrie Thompson reported on the 11th annual National Adoption Day celebrations. She distributed a packet containing data on the number of adoptions that occurred and media

reporting on the event. She advised that partnership with DSHS is going well. There is an ongoing discussion of what can be done next year to do encourage even higher adoption rates and better engage outskirts courts' participation in the program.

Children's Representation Workgroup

Ms. Lisa Kelly reported on the Children's Representation Workgroup. She began with a presentation reminding the Commission members about the 13.34.100(7) RCW implementation and its goal of removing the barriers to children and other individuals as they seek to exercise their right to request counsel for children at public expense. The mission of the Workgroup was to address the ongoing barriers and help major players develop policies and practices to implement the provisions of the RCW and its legislative changes.

Ms. Kelly then led a discussion on what the Commission would now do with the Workgroup report and dissenting opinions. Various Commission members provided their opinions on the Workgroup recommendations. Justice Bridge requested that Commission members send their questions and further comments to Ms. Kelly before the next meeting at which time the Commission will formally respond to the Workgroup's recommendations.

New Business

Member Binders – Revisited

Ms. Kimberly Ong spoke to Commission members about updating the Member Binder. Because the agendas and meeting materials are now available online, discussion surrounded the option of making the binder smaller and more informative for onboarding members. The proposed binder revision includes the Commission's charter, a roster and contact list of Commission members, a list of current and past Commission activities, a list of Commission oversight activities, and two years' of Commission agendas and material. Mr. Hart questioned whether he should read the entire binder before joining the Commission.

Judge van Doorninck asked if May's Commission minutes had ever been approved as she had reviewed the copy sent to her in the meeting materials and found errors. Ms. Ong responded that the minutes had not yet been approved nor had the draft been ready for distribution. May Commission minutes will be sent to members for review prior to the next meeting.

Website Updates

Ms. Nichole Kloepfer notified the Commission of the recent website updates and pointed out where Commission members could find information relevant to upcoming and past meetings. She asked for feedback from Commission members about the functionality of the website.

2016 Meeting Schedule, Proposed dates

Justice Bridge presented the proposed 2016 Commission meeting dates: March 21st, May 16th, and December 12th. August 3rd is confirmed as the Youth Summit Commission Meeting. Justice Bridge requested that the Commission members check their calendars for any potential conflicts and reach out to her before the end of the year to confirm whether or not these dates will work.

Adjourned at 4:10pm by Justice Bridge.
